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(54) **PIVOTING TRAY TABLE ASSEMBLY**

KLAPPTISCHVORRICHTUNG

ENSEMBLE DE TABLE-PLATEAU PIVOTANT

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EP 1 412 246 B1

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Description

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to food tray tables, and more particularly to stowable tray tables which pivot to facilitate cleaning of the tray tables.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Airplanes are equipped with tray tables for use by passengers during flight. Tray tables are typically stowed in the seatback of most passenger seats in a non-operative position, and are lowered into an operative position during flight. As a result of the stowage of the tray tables in the rear of the seatbacks, a passenger generally utilizes the tray table stowed in the seatback that is immediately forward of the passenger. The tray table is customarily connected to a set of arms which pivot downwardly from the seatback to an operative position. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 4,431,231 issued to Elazari et al. describes a reclinable seat and foldable-table assembly whereby both the seat and tray table rotate about a horizontal axis as a unit to enable the seat to recline. The tray table of U.S. Pat. No. 4,431,331 can further rotate from a stowed position in the seatback to an extended position for passenger use.

[0003] The tray table of DE-A-199 45 554 describes a tray table that may be stowed in a recess in a seatback of a seat in a truck, characterised in that besides a tray table with the major surface an additional tray table may be rotated such that an additional surface is achieved to place items upon. Both separate tray table parts pivot around a horizontal axis on one edge of a tray table, without any additional engagement of a tray table with one or more arms of the tray assembly. The main surface of a tray table rotates upwardly over an angle of about 90 degrees, thereby limiting valuable room for a passenger.

[0004] Tray tables are used for a variety of applications, but predominately are used by passengers to rest food or drinks when dining, as well as for supporting laptop computers or other articles. Consequently, passenger use can cause the tray tables to become dirty. Airlines routinely clean the tray tables during turnaround of the aircraft before reuse by other passengers. In order to clean conventional tray tables, such as those described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,431,231, the airlines must lower each tray table from its stowed position, clean the tray surface, and then raise the may back to its initial position. This laborious process is required since the surface of the tray table that is soiled during use faces the seatback once the tray table has been stowed. Since each aircraft includes tens or hundreds of tray tables, the time necessary to clean the tray tables on one aircraft is considerable, thereby causing the airlines to incur significant labor costs and perhaps limiting turnaround time. Moreover, at least some of this time is expended unnecessarily since some tray tables may be clean and not require

cleaning because in order to determine whether or not a tray table is clean, the tray table must be lowered and inspected.

[0005] It would therefore be advantageous to have tray tables that can be more easily inspected and more readily cleaned. By having tray tables that can be more efficiently cleaned, the total cabin cleaning time can be decreased, thereby directly decreasing turnaround time, reducing the indirect operating costs for the airlines, and decreasing the manpower required to clean the cabin.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention overcomes the aforementioned drawbacks associated with conventional tray tables by providing a tray table assembly that is more efficiently cleaned. The tray table assembly includes a tray table and an arm connected to the tray table in such a manner that the tray table is pivotable with respect to the support arm so that the same surface of the tray that faces upwardly during use and that therefore may become soiled also faces outwardly when the tray table is stowed in the non-operative position. Thus, aircraft personnel can quickly assess whether a tray table needs to be cleaned and, if so, can clean the tray table without having to lower the tray table prior to cleaning and then stow the tray table after cleaning. Accordingly, the tray table assembly of the present invention may substantially increase the efficiency with which tray tables are cleaned.

[0007] The tray table assembly comprises an arm adapted to move between a stowed position and an extended position, and a tray pivotally connected to the arm. The tray has opposed major surfaces and is adapted to pivot while the arm is in the extended position such that the entire tray is adapted to pivot between a first position in which one major surface faces upwardly and a second position in which the other major surface faces upwardly.

[0008] The tray table assembly comprises a lip proximate to a major surface that is capable of engaging opposite sides of the arm in the first and second positions. The tray table assembly also preferably comprises a pin, typically carried by the distal end of the arm, that connects the arm to the tray, thereby providing an axis about which to pivot. In this regard, the pin typically engages side surfaces of the tray which extend between the major surfaces of the tray. The tray has also first and second edges with the first edge preferably extending beyond the arm while the tray is in the first position. To avoid inadvertent tipping of the tray, the pin preferably engages the tray closer to the first edge than the second edge.

[0009] The tray table assembly may comprise more than one arm whereby the arms are spaced apart and adapted to move between a stowed position and an extended position. The tray is pivotally attached to the arms and adapted to pivot through an angle greater than 90°, and preferably up to about 180°, about an axis extending between the arms and between first and second positions

while the arms are in the extended position. When the tray table assembly includes more than one arm, a plurality of pins can be used to connect a respective arm to the tray.

[0010] A seat assembly is also provided that preferably comprises a tray table assembly and a seat having a seatback defining a recess for permitting the tray table assembly to be stowed in a non-operative position. A major surface of the tray faces outwardly while the tray table assembly is stowed in the recess defined by the seatback, and the tray is adapted to pivot once the arm is extended such that the same major surface then faces upwardly. Furthermore, the recess defined by the seatback is shaped and positioned in such a way that major surface of the tray table can only be positioned outwardly when stowed in the seatback recess, thus preventing the major surface from facing the seat in the stowed position.

[0011] Consequently, the invention provides a tray table assembly capable of moving between a stowed position and an extended position with the major surface of the tray that faces upwardly during use, facing outwardly when in the stowed position. Since the major surface of the tray is facing outwardly when not in use, the tray table assembly does not first need to be lowered before cleaning the tray table. Instead, the tray may be cleaned while remaining in the stowed position. By facing outwardly while in the stowed position, the tray table assembly may be readily inspected without lowering the tray. As a result, the tray table assembly decreases the total time required to both inspect the tray tables and to clean the soiled tray tables. This in turn will increase the airline's efficiency during turnaround and decrease costs required to clean the aircraft.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0012] Having thus described the invention in general terms, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, which are not necessarily drawn to scale, and wherein:

FIG. 1 is a side elevational view of a tray table assembly of one advantageous embodiment of the present invention showing the assembly in a stowed position as solid lines and in an extended position as dashed lines;

FIG. 2 is a side elevational view showing the tray table assembly of FIG. 1 in its operative position;

FIG. 3 is a rear elevational view showing the tray table assembly of FIG. 2; and;

FIG. 4 is a side elevational view showing the seatback in its lowered position and illustrating sequential views of the tray table of FIG. 1 as the tray table is rotated.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0013] The present invention now will be described

more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention as defined by the claims to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout.

[0014] With reference to FIG. 1, a seat assembly is shown equipped with a tray table assembly in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the invention broadly indicated by reference number **8**. Typically, the seat assembly includes an aircraft seat **42** in which a tray table assembly is mounted in a rear portion of the seatback **10**. However, the tray table assembly can be utilized in other applications, if so desired. The tray table assembly includes a tray table **12** and a support arm **18** which connects to the seatback **10**. In this regard, the tray table **12** is typically pivotally mounted to the seatback **10** so as to pivot about an axis **16**.

[0015] As indicated by both FIGS. 1 and 2, the tray table **12** is a generally planar member having a first major surface **20** that is generally flat for supporting articles. Although generally flat, the first major surface **20** may include a circumferential ridge for preventing at least some articles from rolling off of the tray table. In addition, the first major surface **20** may include one or more pre-formed depressions for receiving cups, cans or the like. The tray table also includes a generally flat second major surface **22** opposite the first major surface **20** and a pair of opposed side surfaces **24** extending between the first major surface and the second major surface. The tray table **12** further includes edge surfaces **26,28** extending between the opposed side surfaces **24** and between the first **20** and second **22** major surfaces. While the side **24** and edge surfaces **26,28** are typically perpendicular to the major surfaces **20,22** of the tray **12**, the side and edge surfaces can have other configurations, if desired. While a substantially rectangular tray table **12** is depicted, it should be understood that the tray table may have other shapes. Although the tray table is typically formed of plastic, the tray table may be formed of other materials, if desired.

[0016] Support arm **18** is generally formed of aluminum or other metals and is capable of supporting the tray **12** as the support arm and tray pivot about the axis **16**. Preferably, the tray table assembly includes more than one arm **18** and, in one common embodiment, includes a pair of parallel spatially separated arms for supporting the tray **12** and enabling the tray to pivot downwardly from the seatback. The support arm **18** is preferably designed to facilitate movement of the tray table between a stored position in which the tray table **12** is disposed in a recess defined by a seatback **10** as shown in solid lines in FIG. 1 and an extended position in which the tray table is held in a substantially horizontal position above the lap of a

passenger as shown in dashed lines. The support arm 18 may have various configurations, but, in the illustrated embodiment, includes three sections serially connected to one another. A first section 30 of the arm is pivotally connected to the passenger seat 42 and is adapted to rotate about axis 16. The third section 32 of the arm is connected to the tray table as described below, while the second section 40 connects the first and third sections.

[0017] With reference to FIG. 3, the tray table 12 preferably has edges or lips 34,36 on both sides of the first major surface 20 of the tray which extend outwardly from the first major surface of the tray. From the perspective of a seated passenger, the lips 34,36 typically extend outwardly from the right and left sides of the tray table. As explained below, the lips 34,36 engage respective arms 18 when the tray table 12 is in the operative position (FIG. 2) and has been rotated such that the first major surface 20 faces upwardly to prevent the tray 12 from rotating further as forces are placed upon the tray table.

[0018] Support arm 18 is generally connected to tray 12 by pin 38 to permit the tray to pivot about an axis 44. The pin 38 is located proximate the distal end of the arm 18 and, in the illustrated embodiment, is carried by the third section 32. The pin 38 preferably engages a side surface 24 of the tray 12 at a position proximate a first edge 26 of the tray, i.e., the edge of the tray closest to the passenger once the tray table is in the extended position and the tray table has been pivoted such that the first major surface 20 is facing upwardly. Once the tray table 12 is rotated to the operative position as shown by solid lines in FIG. 2, the first edge 26 extends beyond the distal portion of the arm 18. By locating the pin 38 proximate the first edge of the tray 26, however, the tray 12 will not be prone to rotate back, i.e., flip toward the passenger, when forces are placed downwardly upon the first major surface 20 proximate the first edge. When the tray table assembly includes more than one support arm 18, the tray table assembly comprises a plurality of pins 38. Each pin 38 is associated with a respective arm 18 for connecting each arm to the tray 12. Each pin 38 is similarly located proximate the distal end of the respective support arm 18 and at a location closer to the first edge 26 than the opposed second edge 28 of the tray.

[0019] With reference to FIG. 3, when the tray 12 is in the extended position with the first major surface 20 facing downward, the lips 34,36 of the tray engage or rest upon the lower edges of the distal portion of the arms 18 to prevent further tray rotation. Similarly, when the tray 12 is pivoted as shown by dashed lines in FIG. 4 to the operative position as shown in FIG. 2 with first major surface facing upward, the lips 34,36 of the tray engage or rest upon the upper edges of the arms 18 to prevent further rotation. This engagement will provide the passenger upon a stable surface for which to place or support items. Also, this engagement ensures that the passenger will be capable of easily placing the tray table into position for use without requiring extensive knowledge or manually operating many moving parts.

[0020] According to another aspect of the present invention, a seat assembly is provided that includes a seat 42 defining a recess in the seatback 10 to house the tray assembly when in the stowed position, as shown in FIG. 1. The recess has similar but slightly greater dimensions than the arms 18 so as to allow the arms to also be fully positioned within the recess of the seatback 10 when stowed. Correspondingly, the recess is also dimensioned slightly larger than the tray 12 to allow the tray to be fully placed within the seatback 10 and ultimately secured in place, such as by means of a rotatable tab, clip or the like. By stowing the tray table assembly within the seatback 10, the tray table assembly will be non-obstructive to the passenger when not in use. When the tray table assembly is stowed in the seatback 10, the first major surface 20 of the tray 12 faces outwardly. The seatback recess can be shaped and sized so as to only receive the tray assembly when the first major surface 20 of the tray 12 is facing outwardly, thereby preventing the first major surface from facing the seat 42 in the stowed position. Since the first major surface 20 of the tray 12 is the surface that faces upwardly during use, the surface of the tray that may be soiled will face outwardly. This will ensure that the tray table surface that may become soiled during use will always be facing outwardly in the stowed position, so that this tray table surface can be easily inspected and cleaned, as opposed to the conventional method of first having to lower each tray table for inspection before cleaning.

[0021] The tray table assembly may be pivoted from a non-operative, stowed position as shown by solid lines in FIG. 1, to an extended operative position as shown in FIG. 2. Generally, the passenger will lower the tray table assembly and rotate the tray 12 so that the major surface 20 is facing upward as shown in FIG. 2. The tray arm 18 is capable of rotating clockwise from the stowed position to the extended position as shown by dashed lines in FIG. 1 when viewed from the left of the tray table assembly. When the tray arm 18 is initially placed in the extended position, the first major surface 20 of the tray 12 is facing downwardly. As demonstrated in FIG. 4, the entire tray 12 can be rotated counterclockwise when viewed from the left of the tray table assembly to an operative position so that the first major 20 surface faces upwardly. When the tray 12 is rotated to the operative position, the lips 34,36 of the tray will engage the support arms 18 to prevent further rotation and establish the operative position. Generally, the tray 12 can pivot at least 90° about an axis extending between the arms 18 when moving from the position in which the first major surface 20 faces downwardly to the operative position. FIG. 4 displays the tray table 12 of one advantageous embodiment that is capable of rotating about 180° until the lips 34,36 of the tray engages the upper edges of the support arms 18. The tray table assembly is preferably designed to be capable of rotating when the seat 42 is reclined as shown by dashed lines in FIG. 4. In this regard, the arms 18 and the tray table 12 are designed to provide ample clearance

for rotation of the tray table while the seat 42 carrying the tray table assembly is fully reclined. Thus, the tray 12 is able to rotate between the positions shown in FIG. 4 at any reclined seat position, which gives the passenger unlimited use of the tray table. Following use, the tray 12 can be rotated to the position in which the first major surface 20 faces downwardly, and then the tray table assembly returned to the recess of the seatback 10 to a stowed position. Thus, the passenger raises and lowers the tray table assembly in a conventional manner between extended and stowed positions. The passenger is then only required to rotate the tray table 12 to the operative position as demonstrated in FIG. 4.

[0022] In sum, the invention provides a tray table assembly capable of moving between a stowed position and an operative position with the first major surface 20 of the tray 12 that faces upwardly during use, facing outwardly when in the stowed position. Since the first major surface 20 of the tray 12 is facing outwardly when not in use, the tray table assembly does not first need to be lowered before cleaning the tray table. Instead, the tray 12 may be cleaned while remaining in the stowed position. By facing outwardly while in the stowed position, the tray table assembly may be readily inspected without lowering the tray 12. As a result, the tray table assembly decreases the total time required to both inspect the tray tables and to clean the soiled tray tables. This in turn will increase the airline's efficiency during turnaround and decrease costs required to clean the aircraft.

Claims

1. A tray table assembly comprising:

at least one arm (18) adapted to move between a stowed position and an extended position; and a tray (12) pivotally connected to said arm (18), said tray having opposed major surfaces (20,22) and adapted to pivot while said arm is in the extended position, wherein said entire tray is adapted to pivot between a first position in which one major surface faces upwardly and a second position in which the other major surface faces upwardly **characterised in that**, said tray has an edge or lip (34,36) for engaging opposite sides of said arm (18) in the first and second positions to prevent further pivoting of said tray.

2. A tray assembly according to claim 1, wherein said edge or lip (34,36) is proximate to a major surface.

3. A tray table assembly according to claims 1 or 2, wherein said tray has a side surface (24) which extends between opposed major surfaces of said tray, one major surface facing upwardly in the first position and the other major surface facing upwardly in the second position.

4. A tray assembly according to claim 1, 2 or 3, further comprising a pin (38) connecting said arm (18) to said tray (12).

5. A tray table assembly according to claim 4, wherein said pin connects to a distal end of said arm.

6. A tray table assembly according to claim 4 or 5, wherein said tray (12) has first and second edges (26,28) with the first edge extending beyond said arm (18) while said tray is in the first position.

7. A tray table assembly according to claim 6, wherein said pin (38) is connected to a side surface (24) of said tray (12) at a location closer to the first edge than the second edge (26,28).

8. A tray table assembly according to any of claims 1-7, wherein said tray (12) is adapted to pivot through an angle of about 180°.

9. A tray table assembly according to any of claims 1-8, further comprising a plurality of pins (38), wherein each pin is associated with a respective arm (18) for connecting said arm to said tray (12).

10. A seat assembly comprising:

a seat (42) having a seatback (10) defining a recess therein; and

a tray table assembly according to any of the claims 1-9 connected to said seat and adapted to be stowed in the recess defined by the seatback, wherein a first major surface of said tray faces outwardly while said tray table assembly is stowed in the recess defined by the seatback, and wherein said tray is adapted to pivot once said arm is in the extended position such that the first major surface then faces upwardly.

11. A seat assembly according to claim 10, wherein the recess defined by said seatback (10) is such that said first major surface (20) of said tray table (12) can only face outwardly in the stowed position, thereby preventing the first major surface from facing the seat (10) in the stowed position.

Patentansprüche

1. Ablagetischanordnung, umfassend:

wenigstens einen Arm (18), welcher eingerichtet ist, um sich zwischen einer verstauten Position und einer ausgefahrenen Position zu bewegen; und eine Ablage (12), welche schwenkbar mit dem Arm (18) verbunden ist, wobei die Ablage ge-

- genüberliegende Hauptflächen (20, 22) aufweist und eingerichtet ist, um zu schwenken, während sich der Arm in der ausgefahrenen Position befindet, wobei die gesamte Ablage eingerichtet ist, um zwischen einer ersten Position, in welcher eine Hauptfläche nach oben zeigt, und einer zweiten Position, in welcher die andere Hauptfläche nach oben zeigt, zu schwenken, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Ablage eine Kante oder eine Lippe (34, 36) aufweist, um in den ersten und zweiten Positionen mit entgegengesetzten Seiten des Arms (18) in Eingriff zu treten, um ein weiteres Schwenken der Ablage zu verhindern.
2. Ablageanordnung nach Anspruch 1, wobei die Kante oder die Lippe (34, 36) zu einer Hauptfläche benachbart ist.
3. Ablagetischanordnung nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, wobei die Ablage eine Seitenfläche (24) aufweist, welche sich zwischen gegenüberliegenden Hauptflächen der Ablage erstreckt, wobei eine Hauptfläche in der ersten Position nach oben zeigt und die andere Hauptfläche in der zweiten Position nach oben zeigt.
4. Ablageanordnung nach Anspruch 1, 2 oder 3, welche weiterhin einen Stift (38) umfasst, welcher den Arm (18) mit der Ablage (12) verbindet.
5. Ablagetischanordnung nach Anspruch 4, wobei der Stift an ein distales Ende des Arms ankoppelt.
6. Ablagetischanordnung nach Anspruch 4 oder 5, wobei die Ablage (12) erste und zweite Kanten (26, 28) aufweist, wobei sich die erste Kante außerhalb des Arms (18) erstreckt, während sich die Ablage in der ersten Position befindet.
7. Ablagetischanordnung nach Anspruch 6, wobei der Stift (38) an eine Seitenfläche (24) der Ablage (12) an einer Stelle angekoppelt ist, welche sich näher an der ersten Kante als an der zweiten Kante (26, 28) befindet.
8. Ablagetischanordnung nach einem der Ansprüche 1-7, wobei die Ablage (12) eingerichtet ist, um um einen Winkel von ungefähr 180° zu schwenken.
9. Ablagetischanordnung nach einem der Ansprüche 1-8, welche weiterhin eine Mehrzahl von Stiften (38) umfasst, wobei jeder Stift mit einem entsprechenden Arm (18) verbunden ist, um den Arm mit der Ablage (12) zu verbinden.
10. Sitzanordnung, umfassend:
einen Sitz (42), welcher eine Rückenlehne (10) aufweist, die eine Ausnehmung darin definiert; und eine Ablagetischanordnung nach einem der Ansprüche 1-9, welche mit dem Sitz verbunden ist und eingerichtet ist, um in der durch die Rückenlehne definierten Ausnehmung verstaut zu werden, wobei eine erste Hauptfläche der Ablage nach außen zeigt, wenn die Ablagetischanordnung in der durch die Rückenlehne definierten Ausnehmung verstaut ist, und wobei die Ablage eingerichtet ist, um zu schwenken, sobald sich der Arm in der ausgefahrenen Position befindet, so dass die erste Hauptfläche dann nach oben zeigt.
11. Sitzanordnung nach Anspruch 10, wobei die durch die Rückenlehne (10) definierte Ausnehmung derart ist, dass die erste Hauptfläche (20) des Ablagetischs (12) in der verstauten Position nur nach außen zeigen kann, wodurch verhindert wird, dass die erste Hauptfläche in der verstauten Position dem Sitz (10) gegenüberliegt.

Revendications

1. Ensemble de table plateau comprenant :

un moins un bras (18) adapté pour se déplacer entre une position rangée et une position déployée ; et
un plateau (12) raccordé de manière pivotante audit bras (18), ledit plateau ayant des surfaces principales (20, 22) opposées et adaptées pour pivoter alors que ledit bras est dans la position déployée, dans lequel tout ledit plateau est adapté pour pivoter entre une première position dans laquelle une surface principale fait face vers le haut et une seconde position dans laquelle l'autre surface principale fait face vers le haut, **caractérisé en ce que** ledit plateau a un bord ou lèvre (34, 36) pour mettre en prise les côtés opposés dudit bras (18) dans les première et seconde positions pour empêcher le pivotement supplémentaire dudit plateau.

2. Ensemble de plateau selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ledit bord ou lèvre (34, 36) est à proximité d'une surface principale.

3. Ensemble de table plateau selon les revendications 1 ou 2, dans lequel ledit plateau a une surface latérale (24) qui s'étend entre des surfaces principales opposées dudit plateau, une surface principale étant orientée vers le haut dans la première position et l'autre surface principale étant orientée vers le haut dans la seconde position.

4. Ensemble de plateau selon la revendication 1, 2 ou 3 comprenant en outre une broche (38) raccordant ledit bras (18) audit plateau (12).
5. Ensemble de table plateau selon la revendication 4, dans lequel ladite broche se raccorde à une extrémité distale dudit bras. 5
6. Ensemble de table plateau selon la revendication 4 ou 5, dans lequel ledit plateau (12) a des premier et second bords (26, 28) avec le premier bord qui s'étend au-delà dudit bras (18) alors que ledit plateau est dans la première position. 10
7. Ensemble de table plateau selon la revendication 6, dans lequel ladite broche (38) est raccordée à une surface latérale (24) dudit plateau (12) à un emplacement plus à proximité du premier bord que du second bord (26, 28). 15
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8. Ensemble de table plateau selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 7, dans lequel ledit plateau (12) est adapté pour pivoter sur un angle d'environ 180°. 25
9. Ensemble de table plateau selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 8, comprenant en outre une pluralité de broches (38), dans lequel chaque broche est associée à un bras (18) respectif pour raccorder ledit bras audit plateau (12). 30
10. Ensemble de siège comprenant:
 - un siège (42) ayant un dossier (10) définissant un renforcement dans celui-ci; et 35
 - un ensemble de table plateau selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 9, raccordé audit siège et adapté pour être rangé dans le renforcement défini par le dossier, dans lequel une première surface principale dudit plateau est orientée vers l'extérieur alors que ledit ensemble de table plateau est rangé dans le renforcement défini par le dossier, et dans lequel ledit plateau est adapté pour pivoter une fois que ledit bras est dans la position déployée de sorte que la première surface principale est alors orientée vers le haut. 40
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11. Ensemble de siège selon la revendication 10, dans lequel le renforcement défini par ledit dossier (10) est tel que ladite première surface principale (20) de ladite table plateau (12) ne peut être orientée que vers l'extérieur dans la position rangée, empêchant ainsi la première surface principale de faire face au siège (10) dans la position rangée. 50
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